

**METHODS AND COMPOSITIONS FOR USE IN THE TREATMENT OF
CHRONIC IMMUNE DISEASE**

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Methods and compositions are provided for use in the diagnosis and treatment of a host suffering from a chronic immune disease. In the diagnostic methods of the subject invention, a host derived sample, typically PBMC or a derivative thereof, is assayed for the presence of low molecular weight fragments of RNase L, typically in conjunction with an evaluation of caspase activity. The results of this assay are then employed to diagnose and/or characterize a chronic immune disease in the host. In the treatment methods of the subject invention, an effective amount of agent capable of enhancing RNase L homodimer activity in the host, e.g., in host PBMC, is administered to the host. Also provided are methods for identifying agents having RNase L cleavage-inhibitory activity or RNase L fragment antagonist activity.

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